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Revolutionary-Era Portrait of British Army Officer William Dansey and Flag He Captured to be Reunited for the First Time in Nearly a Century

Display Marks the First Time the Portrait Has Ever Been Exhibited in America

PHILADELPHIA, AUGUST 12, 2019 – Philadelphia’s Museum of the American Revolution and the Delaware Historical Society have teamed up to reunite a Revolutionary-era flag and portrait for the first time since 1927. The Delaware militia flag captured by British Army officer William Dansey in 1777 and Dansey’s 1781-1783 portrait will be on short-term display together at the Delaware Historical Society from **Thursday, August 22 through Saturday, Sept. 7, 2019**.

This display will mark the first time the portrait of William Dansey, which is on loan from the Duke of Wellington’s Regiment Museum in Halifax, England, has ever been on public view in America. This rare reunion, supported by the Welfare Foundation, will recognize Delaware’s revolutionary history, particularly its role as a battleground during the British campaign to capture Philadelphia in 1777, 242 years ago.

The flag and portrait will be unveiled by both museums on Wednesday, Aug. 21 at 6 p.m. in the Delaware History Museum, 504 N. Market St., Wilmington. The event is free and open to the public. From then until Sept. 7, 2019, they can be seen during regular museum hours, Wednesday through Saturday, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Both the flag and portrait will then be displayed as part of the Museum’s upcoming special exhibition [*Cost of Revolution: The Life and Death of an Irish Soldier*](#) from Sept. 28, 2019 – Mar. 17, 2020.

“The Delaware Historical Society welcomes this opportunity to partner with the Museum of the American Revolution to bring together these important items,” said Dr. David Young, executive director of the Delaware Historical Society. “It’s a remarkable chance to visit the portrait and flag here at the time of year, late August and September, when we commemorate Revolutionary War activities in Delaware, such as Cooches Bridge, Brandywine, and the Rochambeau route.”

The flag has been in the collection of the Delaware Historical Society since it was purchased at auction, along with Dansey’s wartime letters, in 1927. Dansey captured the flag in early-September 1777 from an officer in the Delaware militia during the British advance upon Philadelphia, the capital of the American Revolution. The flag, which Dansey sent home as a war trophy, is made of silk and has a faded green field and 13 red and white stripes in its canton representing the United States.

Textile Conservator Virginia Whelan spent several days last week at the Delaware Historical Society working on the flag, placing it in a new frame and carefully vacuuming the cloth. She estimated that there are only 12 such flags in existence. “There aren’t many,” said Whelan. “And they are in varying stages of condition. The fact that this flag even survived makes it remarkable.”

Along with the flag, the DHS purchased some of Dansey’s letters home, mostly to his mother. They candidly describe the dangers of war in America, calling them the “boisterous Storms of my Profession.”

Dansey sat for his portrait when he returned home on temporary leave from the army to get married in 1781. The portrait remained in the possession of Dansey’s descendants until the Duke of Wellington’s Regiment Museum purchased it with the assistance of an Arts Council England/V&A Purchase Grant Fund Award for 2013-2014.

The Delaware Historical Society has agreed to lend the flag and two of Dansey’s wartime letters from 1777, including one in which he describes his capture of the flag, to the Museum of the American Revolution for its *Cost of Revolution* exhibition. The Duke of Wellington’s Regiment Museum also will be lending the portrait for the exhibition.

“We are excited to partner with the Delaware Historical Society to reunite these Revolutionary-era treasures for exhibits in Wilmington and Philadelphia,” said **Dr. R. Scott Stephenson**, President and CEO of the Museum of the American Revolution. “Together, these items shed light on some of the lesser-known stories of the American Revolution, part of the Museum’s ongoing commitment to presenting the dynamic, unexpected stories of the people and events of our nation’s founding.”

Cost of Revolution will tell the untold story of Richard St. George, an Irish artist and officer in the British Army, whose personal trauma and untimely death provide a window into the entangled histories of the American Revolution and the ensuing Irish Revolution of 1798. Both Richard St. George and William Dansey served as officers in the British Army’s light infantry during the Philadelphia Campaign. Dansey’s portrait, letters, and flag illuminate the wartime

experience of the British light infantry and help to contextualize Richard St. George's personal story.

About Delaware Historical Society

The Delaware Historical Society owns and operates the Delaware History Museum; the Jane and Littleton Mitchell Center for African American Heritage; a nationally recognized Research Library; Old Town Hall; Willingtown Square, four 18th-century houses surrounding a picturesque urban courtyard located in downtown Wilmington; and the National Historic Landmark, Read House & Gardens located in Old New Castle. For more information, call 302.655.7161 or visit www.dehistory.org.

About Museum of the American Revolution

The Museum of the American Revolution explores the dramatic, surprising story of the American Revolution through its unmatched collection of Revolutionary-era weapons, personal items, documents, and works of art. Immersive galleries, powerful theater experiences, and digital touchscreens bring to life the diverse array of people who created a new nation against incredible odds. Visitors gain a deeper appreciation for how this nation came to be and feel inspired to consider their role in the ongoing promise of the American Revolution. Located just steps away from Independence Hall, the Museum serves as a portal to the region's many Revolutionary sites, sparking interest, providing context, and encouraging exploration. The Museum, which opened on April 19, 2017, is a private, non-profit, and non-partisan organization. For more information, visit www.AmRevMuseum.org or call 877.740.1776.